

## **CHAPTER XV - The Lake of Dry Water**

They flew through the jewelled gardens for quite a way, emerging at last from among the trees to find before them a pretty sheet of water of a greenish hue. Upon the shore were rushes that when swayed by the breeze sang soft strains of music.

"This," announced their guide, "is the Lake of Dry Water."

"It looks wet, all right," said Chubbins, in a tone of doubt.

"But it isn't," declared Ephel. "Watch me, if you please."

He hovered over the lake a moment and then dove downward and disappeared beneath the surface. When he came up again he shook the drops of water from his plumage and then flew back to rejoin his guests.

"Look at me," he said. "My feathers are not even damp." They looked, and saw that he spoke truly. Then Chubbins decided to try a bath in the dry water, and also plunged into the lake. When he came to the surface he floated there for a time, and ducked his head again and again; but when he came back to the others not a hair of his head nor a feather of his little brown body was in the least moist.

"That's fine water," said the boy-lark. "I suppose you Birds of Paradise bathe here all the time."

"No," answered Ephel; "for only wet water is cleansing and refreshing. We always take our daily baths in the Lustrous Lake. But here we usually sail and disport ourselves, for it is a comfort not to get wet when you want to play in the water."

"How do you sail?" asked Twinkle, with interest.

"I will show you," replied their guide.

He flew to a tall tree near, that had broad, curling leaves, and plucked a leaf with his bill. The breeze caught it at once and wafted it to the lake, so that it fell gently upon the water.

"Get aboard, please," called Ephel, and alighted upon the broad surface of the floating leaf. Twinkle and Chubbins followed, one sitting in front of their guide and one behind him. Then Ephel spread out his wings of white and orange,

and the breeze pushed gently against them and sent the queer boat gliding over the surface of the dry water.

"Sometimes, when the wind is strong," said the Royal Messenger, "these frail craft upset, and then we are dumped into the water. But we never mind that, because the water is dry and we are not obliged to dress our feathers again."

"It is very convenient," observed Twinkle, who was enjoying the sail. "Could one be drowned in this lake?"

"I suppose an animal, like man, could, for it is as impossible to breathe beneath dry water as it is beneath wet. But only birds live here, and they cannot drown, because as soon as they come to the surface they fly into the air."

"I see," said Twinkle, musingly.

They sailed way across the lake, and because the wind was gentle they did not upset once. On reaching the farther shore they abandoned the leaf-boat and again took wing and resumed their flight through the avenues.

There was a great variety of scenery in the Paradise, and wherever they went something new and different was sure to meet their view.

At one place the avenue was carpeted with big pansies of every color one could imagine, some of them, indeed, having several colors blended together upon their petals. As they passed over the pansies Twinkle heard a chorus of joyous laughter, and looking downward, she perceived that the pansies all had faces, and the faces resembled those of happy children.

"Wait a minute," she cried to Chubbins and the guide, and then she flew downward until she could see the faces more plainly. They smiled and nodded to the girl-lark, and laughed their merry laughter; but when she spoke to them Twinkle found they were unable to answer a single word.

Many of the faces were exceedingly beautiful; but others were bold and saucy, and a few looked at her with eyes twinkling with mischief. They seemed very gay and contented in their paradise, so Twinkle merely kissed one lovely face that smiled upon her and then flew away to rejoin her companions.